

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AEC-11 AID-20 CEA-02 CIAE-00 CIEP-02

COME-00 DODE-00 EB-11 FEA-02 FPC-01 H-03 INR-10

INT-08 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 OMB-01 PM-07 RSC-01 SAM-01

SCI-06 SPC-03 SS-20 STR-08 TRSE-00 PA-04 PRS-01

USIA-15 DRC-01 EURE-00 /177 W
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P R 011548Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7228

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 0435

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, ENRG, FI

SUBJECT: FINNISH COALITION GOVERNMENT SURVIVES NO-
CONFIDENCE VOTE ON ENERGY POLICY

1. SUMMARY: THE FOUR-PARTY SOCIAL DEMOCRAT-LED
COALITION GOVERNMENT TODAY TURNED BACK THE UNITED
OPPOSITION BY 104 TO 90, WITH 5 ABSTENTIONS, AND
SURVIVED YET ANOTHER OF THE MANY NO-CONFIDENCE VOTES
IT HAS FACED DURING ITS LIFE SPAN. END SUMMARY

2. IN HIS OPENING-OF-PARLIAMENT SPEECH ON FEBRUARY 4,
PRESIDENT KEKKONEN PROMISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD
PRESENT A SPECIAL REPORT TO PARLIAMENT ON ITS ENERGY
POLICIES AND ACTIONS. BY FINNISH PARLIAMENTARY
CUSTOM THIS AUTOMATICALLY MADE IT A NO-CONFIDENCE
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QUESTION.

3. THE GOVERNMENT SUBMITTED ITS REPORT ON FEBRUARY 26. THE REPORT AS SUCH WAS RATHER GENERAL, CALLING FOR CONTINUED ENERGY SAVING MEASURES, THE CREATION OF STORAGE RESERVES CORRESPONDING TO THREE MONTHS' CONSUMPTION, A STUDY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NEXT TEN-YEAR PERIOD, SERIOUS ATTENTION TO POSSIBILITIES OFFERED BY NUCLEAR ENERGY, ATTEMPTS TO INCREASE OIL AND COAL IMPORTS, AND A REALIZATION THAT THE DAYS OF CHEAP ENERGY WERE GONE FOREVER.

4. FROM THE VARIOUS SPEECHES IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES WERE NOT IN FULL AGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES AS TO HOW THE SITUATION SHOULD BE HANDLED, WITH DIFFERENCES OF OPINION EMERGING ON THE EXTENT OF GOVERNMENT MONOPOLY AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED NESTE OIL REFINERY CONTROLLED PRICES. THERE WAS GENERAL DISAGREEMENT ON THE RELATIVE BURDEN-SHARING OF COST INCREASES AS BETWEEN CONSUMERS AND INDUSTRY, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION, AMONG ALMOST ALL THE PARTIES.

COMMENT: THE INCREASING BRITTLNESS OF THE CEMENT HOLDING TOGETHER THE COALITION GOVERNMENT WAS AGAIN EVIDENT. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT WERE IT NOT FOR PRESIDENT KEKKONEN'S REPORTED WISH TO SEE THIS MAJORITY GOVERNMENT SURVIVE AT LEAST BEYOND THE FINAL CSCE STAGE THIS SUMMER, IT MIGHT WELL FOLD. AS A SOURCE IN ONE OF THE SMALLER COALITION PARTIES TOLD US, THE FACT THAT THE COUNTRY IS RIGHT NOW IN A SITUATION WHERE THE WAGE AND INCOMES POLICY NEGOTIATIONS ARE AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE MAY HAVE BEEN THE ONLY OTHER REASON WHY THE GOVERNMENT MANAGED TO PAPER OVER INTERNAL DIFFERENCES ON ENERGY AND OTHER MATTERS AND STAY TOGETHER TO SURMOUNT THE CHALLENGE OF THE NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE.

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